

Great Epochs in Church History

AND

Great Characteristics of the
Lutheran Church

Miller, Chas. Armand,
1864-1917



Lutheran Board of Publication
Columbia, S. C.
1909

~~BX 8018~~
~~NY 612~~

BX
8018
M55
1909

PACIFIC LUTHERAN
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
LIBRARY

The Period of Formation.

(By Pastor C. Armand Miller.)

BACK OF THE Church of Christ lies the centuries of preparation. Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Isaiah and the prophets down to Malachi—these names belong to that long preparing of the way of the Lord and making of

His paths straight, until at last John the Baptist, less than the least in the kingdom of heaven, though surpassed by no predecessor, ushered in the Founder of the Church, and its Living Head, when he pointed out, on the banks of the Jordan, the Lamb of God who was to take away the sin of the world.

The Formation of the Church was simply and quietly accomplished. Upon the Chief Cornerstone and the sub-structure of the prophets was laid, under the choice of Christ Himself, the final foundation stones, the Apostles. How carefully the work was done. For three years of teaching and training the Twelve were prepared for the unique place they were to hold in the kingdom of God, and in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. First, to know Him was their need; then, to know the power of His resurrection, through

the gift of the Holy Ghost, and by that same gift to be endued with power and boldness for the proclamation of the good news, the "Gospel," to all the world. They testified by word of mouth, and on the day of Pentecost, the real birthday of the Christian Church, new-born by the coming and regenerative gifts of the Holy Spirit, three thousand souls were added unto them. In their fresh fervor of brotherly love, they held all things in common, and shared every possession with each other, though even this pure Christian communism seems to have proved unsatisfactory and certainly was transient. The continued and frequent preaching of the Word resulted in the accession of multitudes to the Church. Persecution constrained obedience to the command of Christ that they should bear witness to Samaria and the regions beyond, until the sending out of the missionary embassy from Antioch inaugurated a definite program of evangelization as a regular and essential duty of the Church; and the new, large conception of a Christianity free to all races and emancipated from any yoke of Judaism, won the victory, after a struggle in which St. Paul vindicated, with overwhelming clearness and power, the genuine,



REV. C. ARMAND MILLER, D. D.

catholic scope and mission of the Church, in the spirit of Christ's teaching.

To the missionary journey now came to be added, by the moving of the Holy Spirit, a new method of Christian upbuilding and extension, the missionary epistle. For the enforcement of doctrine, for the correction of evils arising in the new congregations but recently emerging from heathenism with its low ideals of conduct, and for the inspiration of believers to earnestness and activity in the development of the Church, these letters were written. In their inspiration the word of Christ was fulfilled by His Spirit: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye can not bear them now." They are the blossoms and fruitage of the germs of truth sown already upon good soil, in the words spoken by Christ Himself when He was with His disciples, and germinating and developing, under the sunshine and the dew of the Spirit, into the full harvest of Christian truth. The clear, deep yet simple body of Christian doctrine, complete and unchangeable, which our New Testament contains, preserved for us of the later generations by divine care, is the richest and most permanent gift to us of the period of the Founding of the Church.

In the growth of the Church's life, under the ever-present brooding of the Holy Spirit, who came on Pentecost to ABIDE with His people, the faith and the worship of the Christian world took form and fixedness. From the very first, as men and women were added to the Church, they entered through the door of Baptism. Each, before that sacrament was received, confessed the faith which he had. Most naturally, and always by the guidance of the fostering Holy Spirit, these confessions, at first brief and simple to

the extreme, came to assume a certain form. As the Holy Spirit revealed more and more fully to the thought of the apostles and leaders of the Church the significance of the well-known facts of Christ's life and death and resurrection, and the well-known words which He had spoken and which were never lost, the baptismal confession, while remaining brief and simple to the last, took on a larger form and a recognized phraseology, until, after tracing it in its development through several centuries, we find it, finally, to have become what we know today as the Apostles' Creed. Precisely in the same way, beginning at a very early period, certain "forms of sound words," of which traces are to be discerned in the New Testament itself, came into use as regular parts of the worship of the Church, doxologies, prayers (after whose very model our Collects are framed), psalms and hymns, used responsively, and always followed by the "Amen" of the hearers, constituted a liturgical service, which could not have been without a certain fixed order even in the very days of the Apostolic Church.

In the first days of the founding of the Church the Christians met every day for specific Christian worship, besides attending the temple, as Christ did, and making it a place of instruction, a kind of missionary center. The Christian service was held "from house to house." At these gatherings presumably none but Christians were present. Here they "continued steadfastly in the teaching of the apostles and in fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in the prayers." (Acts 11:42.) This "breaking of bread" included, with a common meal, the use of the Lord's Supper. It is later that we find the observance of the first day of the week as the Lord's Day, but that this had become general by the time

St. Paul wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians is evident. The observance of Easter Day was also universal in the Church from the beginning, a fact enforced by the other fact that Sunday was regarded as a weekly celebration of the Resurrection. It was customary, too, to precede the Easter celebration with a fast, which varied in duration in different places, but which subsequently became fixed as a period of forty days, the Lenten observance.

We must not fail to notice two things in the public life of the Church in connection with its founding. One is the fact that its worship and also its organization was directly and very closely connected with and influenced by that peculiar endowment of the apostolic age known as the "Charismata," or gifts of the Spirit, for specific service. What these gifts were is to be seen from Rom. 12:5-8 and 1 Cor. 12:28-31. It was the "gift" which a man possessed which entitled him to take part in the worship, with a prayer or a prophecy or an interpretation. It was because the seven who were chosen to care for the poor (Acts 6:1-6) had the "gift" referred to in Rom. 12:7, of "ministry," the same as is meant, in 1 Cor. 12:28, by "helps" that were set apart for this work. The idea that any Christian could be totally ungifted was wholly foreign to apostolic thought. And while the miraculous endowments included and grouped with other "charismata" in these passages, are no longer vouchsafed, yet it is still true, beyond doubt, that each Christian has his gift, and these gifts are still to be recognized in assigning his task to each one, in the choice of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, or of the ministry of mercy (which we call the deaconess work), for a life-calling, as well as in the selection of officers of the Church or congregation, or teachers in the

Sunday-school. Indeed, in the setting apart of the seven to care for the poor we have the beginning of organizations within the Church for special departments of service.

The second noteworthy usage in this period is the observance of two sorts of Christian assemblies, one of a missionary character for instruction, and the other to which only the baptized Christians were admitted for edification and the reception of the Sacrament. Some hold that the coming together of the Christians in the temple, "every day," referred to in Acts 5:42, was a missionary meeting, in which they exercised their calling in teaching and preaching Christ to those who had not accepted Him. But this view is controverted by others, who hold that this was indeed a place of gathering where instruction was given and which really became a sort of missionary center, but that there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that it may be classed as a distinctly Christian service. It is also regarded as probable that the public services held in the Gentile churches were of a distinctly missionary character, a chief aim being the conversion of unbelievers. The services of the other class were, both at Jerusalem and among the Gentile Christians, held privately, "from house to house," in Christian homes, and were distinctly for the edification of believers. These consisted of "reading and teaching the Word of God, of psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; of supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks; of offerings for the common benefit; all culminating in the Lord's Supper," which was connected with the common meal, called the "love-feast."

It is certain that later this distinction between the two sorts of services found expression in the "Missa Catechu-

menorum," to which as a service of edification not only those who were catechumens but also unbelievers, were admitted, and the second service, held immediately after the other, the "Missa Fidelium," which was begun only after all had been excluded who had no right to the Lord's Supper, and which consisted of the participation, with suitable forms, in that Sacrament.

How deep a hold the spirit and aim that we call "missionary" had upon the Church in the period of its founding is impressed upon us by every return to the consideration of the period. One may truly say, in a certain sense, that the missionary work of the early Christians preceded the establishment of congregations. Certainly it preceded the formal and complete organization of congregations. It is after the establishment of the Church at Antioch that the first missionary journey authorized by the Church goes out, but the Church at Jerusalem had but begun to breathe before the persecutions scattered her members far and wide, and where they went they became messengers of the Gospel. These were the first missionaries, willingly testifying but going only under compulsion. How much it reminds us of the reluctance of the Church of today to reach out to the regions beyond. Yet these first Christians learned very soon that to be a follower of Christ was to be a witness for Him, and the missionary journeys, the missionary services, and the missionary efforts of individual Christians in finding, each his own brother, friend, companion and bringing him to Christ, make the first and second centuries wonderful times of widespread conquest.

We must not fall into the error, however, of idealizing the Christians of that early day by overlooking the errors, the

sins, the ignorance, and the weaknesses of their lives. We can readily learn, from careful reading of the Epistles, that even in the lifetime of the apostles there were evils in the Church which today would not be tolerated in one of our congregations. These new converts had come out of heathenism, in Gentile lands, and had brought with them much of the influence of their old heathen training and environment. They had to be told in the church at Corinth, and told with emphasis, that a man who had committed shameful vices was not a fit member of a Christian Church unless he turned from his sin with genuine contrition. Every form of sin which we know today, and which we lament, was to be found in those first churches. Their life was, indeed, far more like the level of practice and conduct in our congregations of converts in foreign mission fields today than like the standard of Christian life found in the churches of Christian lands.

It is easy to understand, with these conditions, how there arose parties and factions, under ambitious or malicious leaders, who introduced error of life and error of doctrine into the Church, so that we soon find "heresies," that is, "parties" or "sects," coming into being. Then follows the long and painful struggle for purity of Christian doctrine and right standards of Christian life. The Church conquered, with the sword of the Spirit, and the standards of the faith were fixed in the Nicene Creed, the Apostles Creed, and, much later, the creed called by the name of Athanasius, the defender of the doctrine of the Trinity and the foremost champion against the heresy of Arius, who denied the true and essential divinity of Jesus Christ.

In the meantime there had come changes in the organization of the Church, along with wonderful growth and increas-

ing power, in spite of the devastating persecutions which raged again and again, under the Roman emperors, against the Christians—persecutions in which St. Paul and St. Peter, along with a host of lesser confessors, laid down their lives as martyrs, witnessing with their blood. The early organization of the Church had arisen almost without definite plan. Those gifted for the work conducted the worship, expounded the Word, advised and guided the company of believers. There would be several groups of believers in a large city, accustomed to meet at a certain home, as the apostle sends greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, "and the church that is in their house." Each of these churches in a house might easily have several who were recognized leaders. Naturally, in time one man, called in the congregations of Jewish Christians "presbyter" or elder, and in the Gentile congregations "episcopos" or "bishop," became the recognized head of each group. The presbyters of a city together constituted an administrative body or council for the Church in that city, and as through age or pre-eminent ability one of these bishops came to be recognized as chief, he would become the acknowledged bishop of the city. After the passing away of the apostles, whose dignity and authority were unimpeached and whose unique place was recognized so that they could have no successors in any characteristic sense, new bonds of union were sought. Delegates or deputies were sent from church to church, from city to city. From the congregational form of government a centralized organization develops. From congregations dioceses are formed, and the continuance of the same process makes sees, successively of archiepiscopates, metropolitans and, after centuries, the papacy. Here in this period of founding

then lie the seeds, in the matter of the Church's organization, for much that afterwards enters of false teaching and false practice, in reference to the hierarchical and prelatical views of the Church. The presbyter, or pastor, becomes a priest, with new and mystical powers, or even a bishop, who claims apostolic authority and grace.

Together with the progress of the Church and its development along monarchical lines of government comes, after three centuries, another great change, which holds the germs of much that afterward brought the period of Deformation. This event was nothing less than the conversion of an emperor to the Christian faith. The Roman empire, instead of an enemy and a persecutor of the Church, becomes its friend and patron. The Church enters into an alliance with the State, and consequences of the utmost importance necessarily emerge in the succeeding ages. After awhile we find the head of the Church, the pope at Rome, claiming temporal as well as spiritual authority over all men and all nations, and with the Church's claim, to place the triple crown upon the brow of its earthly leader, come departures not only from the old faith but from the very principles of Christian life and Christian spirit, and the almost utter loss of the purity and power that had belonged to the Body of Christ in her earlier history.

For us the purpose, without neglecting all that grew up in the later days, under the abiding guidance of the Holy Spirit, to be loyal to apostolic truth, as the New Testament records and bears it, and as it was restored to the knowledge of the people, and to dominance in the Church, under Dr. Martin Luther, who, by the grace of God, brought back to her the birthright she had bartered and all but lost.

The Period of Deformation.

(By Rev. M. G. G. Scherer, D. D.)

 HERE HAS NEVER BEEN a time when the visible Church of God, which alone can be the subject of history, has existed in complete organization, being perfect in every part, function and activity, according to Christ and the Gospel, without defect or element of error or tendency to corruption. It has never yet presented in concrete reality the beautiful figure which Paul had in mind when he sketched the ultimate aim of Christ's redemptive work as "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but * * * holy and without blemish." Nor will it ever answer to this description until Christ the Lord is ready to present it to Himself in glory.

If we look at the history of the Church from the beginning, it is not as a field in which now only wheat is to be seen growing, and now, as we pass on, nothing but tares; but

rather it is like unto a field in which wheat and tares grow side by side, the wheat predominating here, and there the tares. It is difficult, therefore, to set a stake at any particular point along the pathway through the centuries, and say here is the point of the Church's departure from its original simplicity and purity and the beginning of a spurious development. Yet it is an outstanding fact, witnessed by writers of the Middle Ages and acknowledged by

Romanists as well as Protestants during the last four hundred years, that for a very long period of time the Church, though rich in worldly goods and clothed with great power and splendor, was nevertheless so altered in spirit and marred in almost every feature as to be scarcely recognizable as one and the same with the Church of the apostolic days. If it be necessary to assign limits to this Period of Deformation it will suffice, for the purposes of this article, to bracket it thus [500-1500 A. D.]. At no time in that thousand years, especially in the latter half, could St. Peter or St. Paul have easily recognized the Church which they had labored, with the utmost self-denial and sacrifice, to found.

It would be a mistake, however, to infer that the deviations from apostolic principles and practice and the spurious pro-



REV. M. G. G. SCHERER, D. D.

ducts which meet the eye of the historian in the Middle Ages had, in every instance, their beginnings and roots in that period. Many of them may be traced back to conditions or tendencies which were present and at work in the earliest centuries, when the Church was forming. For instance, we find already in the second century not only the distinction between the clergy (with its special divinely conferred priesthood to be employed in mediation between God and sinful men) and the laity (for whom participation in the universal priesthood of believers was nevertheless still earnestly maintained by some): but we find also several ranks among the clergy (bishops, presbyters and deacons), which arrangement was held by the bishops to be of divine institution and therefore necessary. In the third century the bishops had acquired monarchical rank among the clergy, the presbyters and deacons being subject to them. It was no new doctrine when the Council of Trent in 1563 decreed: "If any one shall say that there is not in the Catholic Church a hierarchy established by the divine ordination, consisting of bishops, presbyters and deacons, let him be anathema." And out of that hierarchical constitution, so early reached, in due time there was evolved the monstrous claim of papal supremacy as asserted and made good in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Again in the asceticism which showed itself as a vigorous plant in the second century, both in the Catholic Church and in the Montanist sect, also in the rise of Monasticism in the fourth century, we see the practical working of the notion of the meritoriousness of works which before the time of the Reformation had well-nigh subverted the doctrine of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. In the fourth century the sacrament of the altar is already

conceived of and designated as a sacrifice, although as yet nothing more is meant than that we have in the Supper the representation of the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. The doctrine of purgatory is traced back to the fifth century, yet many of the errors and iniquities connected therewith were of later origin.

The limits of this paper will not permit us to follow the course of development through the centuries and to show how, from beginnings like those which have been pointed out, the Church gradually grew up into that worldly, ambitious, avaricious, tyrannical, persecuting, blood-guilty, soul-deceiving power, huge and formidable, which meets us toward the close of the Middle Ages. Nor need we inquire whether that was the necessary, as well as legitimate, product of those early principles and tendencies; since we are not concerned with a development which might have taken place, but with that which actually did take place. We must confine ourselves to a concise exhibition of the papal system and its practical workings at the time of its greatest outward prosperity, say from 1073 to 1216 A. D. Of the good, of which there is no occasion to deny that there was much in every department, however contradictory this may seem to what has been said above, it is not within the scope of this article to treat, but only of those phases of the Church and church-life which show a manifest departure from the Gospel rule, or even a total subversion of its teachings.

THE PAPACY.

That which stands out most prominently and strikes us as utterly antagonistic to the spirit which Christ enjoined upon the apostles is the papacy itself. Authority and dominion

are the badges of eminence among the Gentiles. "But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." James and John desired only to sit, the one on the right hand of Christ and the other on His left, in His kingdom. But here was the pope, the bishop of Rome, who put himself forward as occupying upon earth the very place of Christ. He was the vicar of Christ. To this position he fancied himself entitled on the pretended ground that he was the successor of St. Peter and heir to his imagined prerogative. He might hypocritically style himself *Servus Servorum*; in reality in the Church he was lord over all. He was the universal bishop. No other could rightly be ordained to the episcopal office without his expressed approval. Absolute submission and obedience to him was the first duty of every member of the clergy of whatever order. His diocese was world-wide, and he exercised his episcopal powers in Germany, France and England as though he had his see there, often indeed disregarding and overriding the rights of diocesan bishops.

And not satisfied with this monarchical power in the spiritual realm the popes greedily grasped at the scepter of temporal supremacy as well. Led on by personal ambition, as well as by the desire of advancing the external glory of the Church, they never ceased to contend with kings and emperors for the mastery. Kings were deposed by them, and crowns transferred. Subjects were released from the obligation of allegiance to their sovereigns. We see the proudest monarchs of Europe submitting to the most humili-

ating conditions in order to escape the wrath of the pope. Witness the case of Henry IV of Germany at Canossa. For three days in midwinter (January, 1077), from morn till evening, fasting and sackclothed, bareheaded and barefoot, stood the emperor in the courtyard of the castle seeking access to Pope Gregory VII, to whom he had hastened from Spires in order to obtain reconciliation and absolution. By means of his dreaded interdict Innocent III humbled Philip Augustus of France, the most powerful ruler of his day (1200). By interdict, excommunication and deposition the same formidable pontiff brought King John of England into the dust of humiliation (1212), that monarch laying down his crown, and with it his kingdom, at the feet of the pope's legate, from whose hand he received it again as a fief from the overlord of Christendom. Indeed, there was no power on earth over which the "crowned priest" on the Tiber did not exalt himself. The papacy had become thoroughly secularized; and we are not surprised to find the occupants of Peter's chair resorting to all the methods known to worldly potentates in order to compass the objects of their ambition. Neither do we marvel greatly at the mercenary spirit which characterized the court of Rome toward the close of the Middle Ages, nor at the schisms and scandals that disgraced the papacy in the eyes of the world and prepared the minds of men for the advent of reform.

THE CLERGY.

As has been said the clergy had been, from very early times, organized into the several orders of bishops, priests and deacons. These, with the pope at their head, constituted a hierarchy for the government of the Church, for the con-

duct of worship, and for the administration of the sacraments. The functions of each order were clearly defined. All of them stood above the people, the laity. To show how strictly the line was drawn between the two classes it may be noted that at the Council of Macon (585) it was enacted that whenever one of the laity met one of the clergy in the public streets the former should make a lowly and reverent bow; if both parties are on horseback, then the layman should take off his hat; but if the layman be on horseback and the clergyman be on foot, the former is to dismount and make his obeisance. The relations of the several ranks of the clergy to each other were as nicely drawn. And all this was by divine appointment.

In the Middle Ages to be a bishop was something great, even from a worldly point of view. For besides certain powers and distinctions which belonged to the bishops as spiritual lords, they enjoyed also all the advantages and dignities of vast wealth and great political power. Most of them came from the ranks of the nobles, and thus some of them had rich estates of their own which they held as fiefs from the king. But besides this the churches everywhere had come into possession of much land through the donations and legacies of princes and rich people, and in many instances through deeds forged by the hand of a priest. Hallam says that, according to some authorities, the clergy enjoyed nearly one-half of England. In Gaul at the close of the seventh century fully one-third of the territory was in possession of the churches and monasteries. Thus the lands belonging to the numerous churches of a bishopric would constitute an immense territory. The bishop had the administration of all the property of the Church throughout

his diocese. Ranke says, in his "History of the Popes": "Baronial and even ducal rights were held in Germany by the bishops and abbots of the empire, not within their own possessions only, but even beyond them. Ecclesiastical estates were no longer described as situated in certain counties, but the counties were described as situated in the bishoprics." And as Church property was not exempt from feudal service, the bishops were frequently found taking the field at the head of their vassals.

In addition to all this the bishops had in their hands a very large proportion of the business which now belongs to the civil magistrates. This is a great subject in itself, and of it but little can here be said. The bishops had exclusive jurisdiction over the lower clergy, not only in regard to the duties pertaining to their several offices but also in civil suits, and even if they were charged with criminal offenses. The civil magistrate was forbidden to entertain complaints against the clergy. The bishops had jurisdiction also in causes involving the rights of widows and orphans, in those relating to marriage, to contracts, to wills, to usury, and other matters. Thus it may be readily seen that these dignitaries could have had but very little time to attend to the spiritual welfare of the Church. It was a significant remark of Innocent III when he said: "The Lord has given not only the whole Church, but the whole world to St. Peter to govern." And the bishops were often more concerned about temporal affairs than they were about the spiritual interests of their flocks.

As for the secular clergy of the lower ranks they were entirely subject to the bishops, and for refusal of canonical obedience and other offenses might be deprived of office or

imprisoned in the monasteries. They were largely drawn from the servile classes and were, for the most part, uneducated and incapable of influencing the masses for good. Yet to them was given authority to rule over the people; and the people, ignorant and superstitious, had no alternative but to obey, for it was only through the priest that they could obtain forgiveness of sins and the salvation of their souls.

WORSHIP, DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE.

The divine service consisted chiefly in the ceremonial of the mass. The service was everywhere in the Latin language. Preaching formed no essential part of the regular divine service; from the time of the invasion of Europe by the barbarians it had rarely been attempted; the parish priest and even the bishop were seldom qualified to deliver spiritual discourse. In the thirteenth century preaching again became quite common; but the preachers were the friars of the Mendicant Orders. They preferred the open air, streets and market places, where the people flocked around them in crowds. Some of them acquired great fame. Yet the regular church service, as formerly, consisted only of the mass and the liturgy used in connection therewith. The preaching of the Word was neglected.

And what was the mass? It was that which we call the Lord's Supper, or the communion. Yet the idea of the communion, the partaking of the body and blood of Christ, was now quite overshadowed, if not replaced, by that of sacrifice. The mass is the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, which are really present under the appearances of bread and wine, and are offered to God by the priest for the living and the dead. It is not a different sacrifice from that of the

cross. The victim is the same, because the same Christ, who once offered Himself a bleeding victim to His Heavenly Father on the cross, continues to offer Himself, in an unbloody manner, by the hands of His priest on the altar. "It is a true sacrifice of atonement, by which, if we draw near to God with upright hearts, in true faith, humility and penitence, we obtain mercy and grace. Hence it is not merely for the sins, punishments, satisfactions and other needs of the living faithful, but is also accomplished for the departed who are in purgatory and not yet fully purified." The sacrifice was offered also for the removal of earthly ills, sufferings and accidents, for which purposes it was sufficient if the sacrificing priest only partook. Thus it came about that the people ceased to partake of the communion at the ordinary services and only joined in at certain festivals. To partake of the communion was looked upon as a good work, meriting grace.

Yet even the sacrifice of the mass, which of itself proclaimed the insufficiency of the one sacrifice of Christ upon the cross, was not sufficient to take away sins. If one be in mortal sin he must obtain pardon before going to the communion in the sacrament of penance. He must excite himself to sincere contrition for his sins (*contritio cordis*), confess to his priest (*confessio oris*), and make satisfaction by performing the penances enjoined upon him by the priest (*satisfactio operis*), such as prayers, fastings, alms and other good works.

But as few could ever perfectly fulfil all the requirements of penance and the other sacraments of the Church in this life, those dying with a debt against them must render satisfaction to the justice of God in the fires of purgatory.

Souls burdened with sin could extract little comfort from this doctrine. It served, however, to prepare the minds of the people for the traffic in indulgences.

All temporary punishments, such as the penances imposed by the Church and the pains of purgatory, could be cancelled by indulgences granted by the Church. These indulgences were like a bank check; they drew upon the treasury of the infinite and superabundant merits of Christ, the virtues and good works of Mary, the mother of the Lord, and of all the saints. They could be purchased with money, and could be procured by the living in their own behalf, or in behalf of those still in purgatory for the purpose of delivering them from their sufferings. Thus the system wrought itself out into a species of merchandise, into a shameless traffic in souls. The supreme concern of pope and clergy was money, ever more money. The pure doctrine of the Gospel, the true way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, was not heard. Souls were deceived and led to put their trust in masses, penances, purgatorial sufferings, indulgences, intercessions of saints, in everything but the right thing. The sheep were starved instead of being fed, because instead of true shepherds they had hirelings over them.

LIFE AND MORALS.

A word about the life and morals of the times under consideration. The Christian life was formed almost wholly upon the ascetic idea. The evidence of this is seen in the numerous monasteries whose walls cast their shadows on almost every part of Europe. It is witnessed by the vast numbers of those who sought refuge in these religious houses so-called; ostensibly, to escape the temptations of the world

and by prayers, watchings and fastings to mortify the body and purify the soul; too often, however, only to find easement from the hardships incident to the struggles of life. It is further witnessed by the high valuation placed upon the monastic life in the popular mind; it was thought of and designated as the religious life. And the ascetic idea and practices were not confined to the cloisters. They were equally espoused by the Mendicant Orders, of whom there were great numbers roaming the country and making a virtue of subsisting upon the charities of the benevolent. In fact, monasticism, though not organically a part of the Church, had impressed its character upon the Church, and its ideals were universally acknowledged. The religious life, in theory, consisted in renunciation of the world, in subduing the flesh by fastings and scourgings and other modes of physical torture, and in a ceaseless round of prayers addressed to Mary and the other saints. And yet notwithstanding men thus relied for salvation upon the merit of their own works, allowing for shining exceptions, the times were singularly corrupt. The immorality of the monks was proverbial. Many of the bishops lived in open concubinage; and the lower clergy followed their example. And what could be expected of the people? It is the story of Israel over again: "They being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

The Period of Reformation.

(By Rev. J. E. Whitteker, D. D.)

HE PERIOD OF REFORMATION went to the heart of things—every line straight from the center to the very outer edge. In doing so the Church of the Reformation gave a name that is co-extensive with Christendom, the name Protestant. For it is a plain fact of history that at first to be a Lutheran and a Protestant meant the same. It happened on this wise: The Diet held at Spires in 1526 was quite favorable to the evangelical cause. But three years later, when a Diet was held at the same place, the papal party gained control and made decrees that not only annulled what had previously been granted, but also made it binding upon all ministers to hold mass and preach the Gospel according to the dictates of the Church of Rome. In answer to this decree the evangelical princes drew up a solemn protest that, for themselves and their subjects, they would not consent to these decisions, but would treat them as if they did not exist. From that act these Lutheran princes received the name Protestants, because they protested against every doctrine that is contrary to the pure Gospel of faith in Christ.

It was no slight matter to stand in open defiance of Rome. By their firm fidelity to the faith of the fathers these Luth-

eran princes brought down upon themselves the wrath of the emperor, and of the pope, and of all the princes that adhered to the pope. These were the great original Protestants. They became such in the face of sword and stake. And if we are going to be worthy of the name, we must be Protestants in the true original sense, stand by the principles for which these men staked their lives, and protest by every privilege which God has granted us, and every power which God has given us, against everything that would drag down the Church of Christ and make it the mean instrumentality of man, to glut his greed for power and place.

1. The Period of Reformation, therefore, started with the right spirit: it started at the right point—the Word of God, the rule of faith and life. And this rule, to be effective, must be in the hands of the people: hence “Luther’s Bible.” And Luther’s Bible became the model of all that followed it. The very English Bible that we read has its wonderful impress upon it. The present authorized version of the sacred Scriptures was not a new one: it was but a revision of Tyndale’s Bible. To this it owes all its excellences and beauties. But where did Tyndale’s Bible get its excellences and beauties?



REV. J. E. WHITTEKER, D. D.

The answer of history is, that it got them directly from Luther's Bible. The very work of translating the New Testament into English was done in Germany—done at Wittenberg, right under the powerful spell of Luther. It is set down, therefore, as a fact, clear and beyond dispute, that in his work of translation Tyndale made free use of Luther's Bible, modeling his own after it and very commonly adopting it. And so marked was the similarity and so unmistakable the source, that when Tyndale's translation came into the hands of the people it was called "The Lutheran New Testament translated into English."

In view of the fact, therefore, that our authorized English Bible is but a revision of Tyndale, to whom it owes all its excellences and beauties, it is not claiming too much when we say that the Period of Reformation restored the Bible to the people through a Lutheran source.

2. The Period of Reformation, with an open Bible, produced an enlarged creed based upon it. The historic order is significant: the three general creeds hold first place; the next, in order of time, is our own Augsburg Confession. Judged by this special declaration of doctrine, the Lutheran Church is older even than the Church of Rome—the decrees of the Council of Trent having been set forth more than thirty years after the presentation of the Lutheran Confession at Augsburg.

And not only does our Church take precedence in point of time, but, what is more important, she ranks first and fundamental in point of principles. Dr. Schaff, the great Reformed divine, wrote of the Augsburg Confession: "Its influence extends far beyond the Lutheran Church; it struck the keynote of other evangelical confessions and strengthened

the cause of the Reformation everywhere." It is not claiming too much, therefore, when we say, in the words of the late Dr. Morris: "The substance of the Augsburg Confession, and in many instances its precise language, has been incorporated into every similar declaration adopted by other communions since that day." It is this plain fact that leads a bishop in the Episcopal Church to make the frank acknowledgment: "In more than one respect the Augsburg Confession is the source of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, their prototype in form, their model in doctrine, and the very foundation of many of their expressions." And, as the late Dr. Seiss expressed it, since the Methodist Church is but an offshoot of the Church of England, and her articles are but a slight modification of the Thirty-nine Articles, they are clearly but a remoter, and hence a weaker issue from the same Lutheran source.

3. The Period of Reformation passed through regular stages in its development: first the Bible; then the doctrine based upon it, and lastly a form of worship in harmony with it. And once more the Lutheran Church holds first place. It is a fact of history that the first Book of Service in England was largely modeled after those forms which the Lutheran Church had already restored from the pure service of the earlier Christian age. And wherein the Book of Common Prayer—the pride of the Episcopal Church—differs from those original forms, she has broken the succession, lost in genuine churchliness, and forfeited her claim as the great representative of pure historic worship.

Forms of worship as well as declarations of faith are a growth. The Lutheran Church in her origin would no more cast aside the pure worship of the past than the pure faith

of the past. And so just as she took up and embodied in her creed every essential doctrine, so she has taken up and embodied in her Liturgy everything that has given spirit and life to worship since the days of the apostles. In this she stands first and alone.

In the Period of the Reformation, therefore, the Lutheran Church is the central figure. In the true historic sense she is the one and only Protestant Church. She was the means, under God, of giving to the people the Bible in the language of the people. She not only retained, in their purity, the early creeds of Christendom, but has given to the world, in perfect harmony with them, the first and noblest Confession of modern times. And besides, she has preserved whatever is pure and excellent and of good report in the worship of each succeeding age. And so, at every point in the Period of Reformation she holds the pre-eminent place.

As we review, therefore, the Period of Reformation, the Lutheran Church stands in the very forefront. Is this but a matter of idle boast—a sort of brazen image to adore? Let us be warned by Israel's fate and Rome's defeat. We must fight the same battles today that our fathers fought. We must enter our protest against everything that is wrong in principle or ruinous in practice, as did those noble princes of the sixteenth century. We must contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, and stand up for pure forms of worship, sound evangelical preaching and sober church-life. We stand among the churches where God's Israel of old stood among the nations—a Church out of tune with the world because the world is at discord with God. Our Church is not a thing of shallow sentiment—a religion of smiling and smirking and hand-shaking. Her basis and

bulwark are eternal truth. She believes that whatever is a principle today is a principle forever. She takes no stock in the splash and spasm methods of the age; but she pins her faith to solid, sober thought.

As a Church, we hold fast that which is good because it is time-tested and God-approved; and holding in firm grasp that which we have already attained, we press forward to the accomplishment of all that is great and glorious in the sight of God. In our Church Confessions and our forms of Church worship, in which is embodied every possible principle of Christian faith and life, we have the grandest heritage of any of God's children on earth. It is our peculiar birth-right, and it would be folly for us to barter it for the most tempting mess of pottage. What we need is a keen sense of appreciation of what we possess, a realization of the infinite value of that priceless pearl that has, in the providence of God, been entrusted to our keeping. What we need, too, is a spirit of loyalty to our Lutheran faith, and fidelity to our Lutheran practice; and while exercising charity for all and malice toward none, to strive by ways in keeping with the dignity of the Church and the nobility of the Gospel, to move forward in the same old paths in which our fathers trod, until from the river unto the ends of the earth the pure faith of the Reformation is taught and its pure practices are adopted.

In view, therefore, of the inspiring history which lies back of us, and the noble legacy which has been transmitted to us, and the glorious spread of possibilities which lie before us, we should remain true to the faith which the period of the Reformation restored unto us; so that amid all the doubt and uncertainty, all the new theology and higher criticism,

all the patchwork of worship and tinkering of creeds, all the ear-itching and palate-tickling which characterize our times, our grand old Church may prove to be the conservative power of the future as she has been the great reformative power of the past.

The Period of Transformation.

(By Rev. Charles S. Albert, D. D.)



HE PERIOD OF REFORMATION was followed by the Period of Transformation. The reforming ideas were to be apprehended and transformed into practical life. The totality of the results of the Reformation was immense in extent and profound in character. Modern life is the outcome. In this brief article we confine ourselves to the practical activities of the Lutheran Church and do not attempt to present the total results of combined Protestantism.

Political changes, due to Reformation ideas, are also omitted. The ideas of the right of conscience, of the right of private judgment, of the value of the individual resulted in representative and democratic forms of government, the freedom of the press, religious toleration, freedom of thought and liberty to worship God according to the dictates of one's own conscience. But we cannot more than allude to these.

We restrict ourselves to the Lutheran Church, to its Transformation of Luther's ideas and their realization in the practical activities of the Church—evangelism, education, works of mercy and moral reforms.

Luther was a religious genius. He was fruitful in religious ideas, drawn from the Word of God. He restored the

pure Gospel to the Church. Yet "his religious instinct preserved him from the attempt to simply reproduce the thought of the apostolic age." He held fast to that which, under the Spirit's guidance, the Church had developed. Luther's Reformation has been justly designated the Conservative Reformation. He retained whatever was not contrary to God's Word, that was edifying and profitable. Luther's ideas needed to be formulated. It was the task of the second period to construct the forms and formulas which would permanently embody Luther's ideas and correlate them to the other Scriptural teachings of the Church. This was the work of Melanchthon and his successors, the final results coming to us in the Formula of Concord.

We are not to conclude that these confessions exhausted the rich ideas of Luther. Much remained for earnest study. The sons of Luther have been busily transforming his thoughts in all the centuries since. There is much valuable truth not yet possessed. Seeberg says: "Evangelical theology must continue to seek, and seeking shall yet find, in the marvelous intuitions of the Reformer's ideas, viewpoints, inspirations, energy and a renewal of her strength."

The Period of Transformation is, therefore, first, the



REV. CHAS. S. ALBERT, D. D.

period which transforms the life-giving ideas of the Reformer into the thought of today.

On the other hand, it takes the essential truths of the Reformation and transforms them into practical life. The religious ideas of Luther produced new ideals, some of which were realized clearly from the beginning, others of which were realized only after years, some of which are being perceived now.

The Reformation transformed the doctrine of good works. It taught that man is justified without any merit or worthiness of his own. God alone redeems and saves. Man contributes nothing. He lays hold by faith on Jesus Christ, who saves him. It does not, therefore, like the Roman Church, credit man with a part of his salvation, saying man is saved by faith and works. It demands good works, not as a condition of salvation, but as the expression of love kindled by faith. Thus Luther taught in the Freedom of the Christian Man. This revolutionized the whole attitude of men toward the so-called religious life as practised by Rome. Men could serve God in any other calling as well as in monastic houses. The child of God was as much obligated to do works of mercy as the so-called religious orders. Transformation swept away monasticism and restored the dignity of motherhood and fatherhood, and of every man in his secular occupation.

New religious life meant evangelism—carrying the Gospel to others. Others must know the truth. This was duty to be done at any cost. The Reformation went out like a mighty tidal wave over the Christian lands. It penetrated into Spain on the west and Scandinavia on the north. Then

came the counter-reformation of Rome, the check from the Thirty Years' War, so awful in its devastations.

"It is a remarkable phenomenon and characteristic of the vital power of Evangelical Lutheranism," says Dr. Schodde, "that just during this period of danger and sufferings the Church gave ample evidence of the strength of its faith. During these years many of the finest specimens of the magnificent hymnology of the Church were produced. It was during the period of the Thirty Years' War that Paul Gerhardt, that prince of pious singers, lived and labored, as also did many others whose spiritual songs are a lasting treasure to the Christians of all succeeding generations."

A time of religious declension followed the Thirty Years' War. With Spener there came a return to the living faith as held by Luther and naturally to practical Christian work, the necessary result of vital union with Jesus Christ. One of the evidences of this transformation was the great orphanage founded at Halle by Francke, which became one of the largest institutions of its kind in the world and the parent of innumerable others, including the famous Bristol orphanage of George Mueller. Later a Bible and publication house was established, which has distributed the Scriptures in many languages.

It is to be noted that the child-like confidence in the Father, so characteristic of the Lutheran Church, has been signally shown in the conduct of these and similar institutions. Those godly men, Francke of Halle, Falk of Weimar, Wichern of "Rauhe Hause" at Hamburg, Von Bodelschwingh of Bielefeld, Passavant of our own land, and others brought in prayer the wants of the needy in their institutions to God, and were answered in the most signal manner. Sometimes,

when they prayed, everything was exhausted, but always God honored the steadfast trust of His children, answering so marvelously that supplies came just when everything had been consumed.

These wonderful records are the finest replies to the claims of mere humanitarianism, and to the schemes of ethical philanthropy in our day. They show that God helps his servants, that without His aid no great institution of mercy or of moral reform can be successfully carried on for any length of time. His love becomes the dynamic to give power to His servants in trials and deprivations. His Spirit aids to regenerate those whom surroundings may help but can not change. In the regeneration of the individual lies the beginning of all reformation and the hope of permanent building up of character—in God and not in man-made schemes.

The vision of evangelism came in larger measure. The heathen had been strangely neglected. Protestants had no foreign missions. Some young men who came under Francke's instruction were moved to devote themselves to the work of carrying the Gospel to the heathen, if the way should open. Christian, Lutheran king of Denmark, became interested in the religious condition of his colony at Tranquebar, India, and resolved to send some Christian teachers to the natives. His chaplain, Dr. Luetkens, was a friend of Francke's, and so it came about that two young men, Bartholomew Ziegenbalg and Henry Pluetschau, were sent to Tranquebar as missionaries in 1705. They were markedly successful. The Lutheran churches of Denmark and Germany supported the work, organizing a missionary society in 1721. Other men were sent into the field, one of whom, Christian Frederick Schwartz, was among the greatest

missionaries in the history of missions. This promising enterprise, owing to troubles at home and abroad, was absorbed by the Episcopal Church. This same development sent Muhlenberg to our shores and impelled Campanius to give the Gospel to the Delaware Indians.

The dreary period of rationalism and the Napoleonic wars were deadly foes to the Transformation of the Lutheran ideas into practical results in the sphere of missions and benevolent and social work.

In the nineteenth century the Lutheran Church in Germany, Scandinavia and America again took up the work of foreign missions. Though late in beginning, the work has been most remarkable in its progress. Dr Lenker gives the Lutheran Church over two thousand missionaries and more than seven hundred thousand members, a goodly proportion of the adherents won by Protestants from heathenism to Christ. In addition to this many English mission societies have been strengthened by volunteers from Germany, a goodly number of whom were the children of our Church and inheritors of her faith and spirit. The Lutheran Church is just coming into its sense of responsibility. Everywhere it is responding to Christ's command and greater results are to be looked for in the near future. Nowhere is this spirit more manifest than in the United Synod. Whilst others are at work also, there is in our Lutheran missions a spirit and method derived from her teachings, which make them eminently evangelical and biblical in ideal and methods.

In 1848 there was inaugurated in Germany the many-sided and extensive activity of Christian love called "Inner Missions"—rich expression of "works of mercy." Wichern said: "Saving love must become for the Church the great

instrument through which to give proof of her faith." Through his appeals and enthusiasm "was begun and organized a work of love for the neglected and lost that in magnitude and systematic operation can not be paralleled anywhere."

Dr. Vedder, a Baptist, writes appreciatively of it, pointing out that much of the "settlement work" and the activities of the "institutional church" in American cities have a counterpart in inner missions. It makes much of preventive methods. The Creche or public nursery for children of poor mothers was established in Germany in 1850. Schools for little children are numerous where poor children receive elementary training in manners and morals, as well as education. Some of the deaconess homes have schools to train girls for domestic service, and these also provide temporary lodging for girls who come in from the country to seek such service. Seamen's homes and immigrant work are also sustained.

Another important line of work is the care of the defective, the sick and the needy. Homes for the orphan, the blind, the deaf and the dumb, for idiots and epileptics abound. Bielefeld, managed by Pastor Von Bodelschwingh, whose work is described in "The Colony of Mercy," a book to inspire, is marvelous in what it has done and is doing. More than four thousand unfortunates of various kinds are taken care of by this one institution alone.

"Though inner missions recognizes that formation is better than reformation, it does not neglect effort for those who have gone astray." Homes to rescue idle boys, fast becoming vicious, and Magdalene homes are examples.

City mission work, whilst not less religious than in American cities, is broader in its scope. "The sanitary condition

of the people and their dwellings is a matter of careful inquiry, and their moral surroundings are not less carefully scrutinized. The aim is to secure for people who are disposed to live a Christian life conditions that will offer them a fair opportunity, but the chief effort is for their spiritual improvement, to persuade those estranged from the Church to return to it, to attend its services and profit by its ministrations." Literature, in the way of tracts, "penny sermons," Christian papers, books, is extensively used.

The Lutheran Church in Germany (for we cite Germany because in this country our Church is not able to give the true object lesson concerning its faith, as it is but a branch of the aggregate Protestant force in America), has addressed itself to social problems. It follows Luther's idea that the Church must not usurp the province of the State; yet it must boldly call the attention of the State to evils, and give the inspiration and principles to the men who rule and govern and to the people who choose rulers. Where it can, it must seek to ameliorate the hard conditions of society and correct evil. It must take part in moral reforms.

In Germany there are "workingmen's colonies," which seek to solve the social problem in general on the one hand, and the tramp perplexity on the other. Pastor Von Bodelschwingh has also erected workingmen's homes in connection with his colony (see Schodde's "The Protestant Church in Germany, Workingmen's Colonies," p. 90). "Workingmen's Associations" have been organized to counteract the baneful influence of social democracy and keep the workingmen in the churches. Homes or hospices have been founded in all the larger cities and towns, for the entertainment of the

traveling public, especially of workingmen, where Christian services are held and congenial Christian companions found.

Workers, both men and women, for the labors of patience and self-denial necessary to carry on these multiform works of mercy, are numerous. These are ready for Christ's sake to give their lives for these objects. Conspicuous are the deaconess homes, begun by Pastor Fliedner in Kaiserswerth, which send forth more than 17,000 women to various fields of Christian labor. Evangelical principles control this order, and anti-biblical ideas and rules that control nuns and sisters of mercy in the Catholic Church are rejected. There is also an order of male deacons, lay workers.

In our own country, our Church is noted for its institutions of saving love, increasing year by year. We are growing in mission zeal and activity. Inner missions are being carried out more and more. Moral reforms obtain both study and support. The grace of God is in our midst impelling to every good work.

Space fails to tell of the activity of the Church in education, based on the Lutheran idea of child-nurture. Luther provided the school for the child and a text-book unexcelled, the Small Catechism. "If you wish to introduce any idea into a nation's life put it in the schools," is a truth our Church knows. We are compelled in this country to provide religious instruction through the Sunday and Church school. Possibly no problem is of greater importance just now than that of the religious instruction of our children. That our thoughtful men are striving to solve it, is encouraging.

May this rapid survey encourage us; may it reveal to us the noble character of our own Church and its vantage because of the deep evangelical truths which are her own; may it

increase our loyalty; above all, may we become more hopeful. Our Church can not stand still. She must progress. More and more she must transform into practical life her evangelical ideas and gloriously achieve greater deeds of love. She must quicken, inspire, comfort, endure and bring her message of hope and life to a perplexed and weary world.

Historical Characteristics of the Lutheran Church.

(By Rev. Walton H. Greever, D. D.)

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CRITICAL CHURCH.

SHE HAS BEEN CRITICAL in the best sense of the word. The Lutheran Church has always been a discriminating Church. From the very beginning she has "tried the spirits whether they were of God." As Luther found the supreme authority in the Word of God, and accepted the Word of God as the infallible rule of faith and practice, so has the Lutheran

Church been governed always, in faith and life, by the Word. She has prized tradition, but only in so far as it was in accordance with the Word. She has been a diligent student of history, but her judgment of all events and human achievements has been given in the light of the Word of God. She has been reverent, diligent, earnest and prayerful in her study of the Word. Exegesis has always preceded exposition with her; and she has maintained that no Scripture is of "pri-



REV. W. H. GREEVER, D. D.

vate interpretation," that is, that no man has a right to read into the Scriptures anything which may suit the personal theories which he seeks to establish, but she holds that the Scriptures have but one natural, original meaning, and that he who would interpret them must find that meaning and hold to it, no matter what theories of fancy or reason may be contradicted. The Lutheran Church approaches the Scriptures in order to find the truth, not to prove it. The Lutheran Creed is brought back to the Scriptures for confirmation only because it has been drawn out of the Scriptures in the beginning. The Lutheran Church brings other creeds to the Scriptures in order to test their origin and their content. The first thing the Lutheran Church looks at in another professing Christian body is its faith, its creed, and if she compares creeds with creeds, others with her own, it is only because she has made a most thorough test of her own in the light of God's Word. In her interpretation of the Word, the Lutheran Church has always followed most strictly those sound rules which insure the right interpretation through the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit in the Word. First, she takes every passage in the Bible literally unless there is something in the text or in the context which indicates beyond doubt that the language is figurative. Second, she studies every particular passage in its connection, considering what goes before, and what follows after, as well as the author, the general purpose of the book in which the passage is found, and the circumstances under which it was written. Third, she will not formulate a doctrine until she has studied, as above, every passage in the Bible bearing upon that doctrine. Fourth, in every case of doubtful meaning she has taken the plainest

meaning indicated in the language in which the passage was originally written, regarding translations as themselves interpretations of the original. That some have abused this critical practice has not been the fault of the Lutheran Church. Praying for guidance into all the truth, she has made every possible effort to discriminate between truth and error, and to hold the truth more precious than all else beside. She has sought with equal earnestness to find the true standard of practice. She has sought the pure doctrine that she might be enabled to have and live the true life.

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CONSERVATIVE CHURCH.

Not only has the Lutheran Church been critical, in the sense that she has sought constantly to "prove all things," but she has always been conservative in the sense that she has sought to "hold fast to that which is good." The Lutheran Church has never taken an extreme position upon any great question of doctrine or of life. Even individual Lutherans of proper training, in spite of temperament and natural weaknesses, are rarely ever found among radicals or fanatics. There is a deep reason for the notable fact that Lutheran people are characteristically quiet and inconspicuous in public affairs. It is the expression of fundamental principles. And yet the Lutheran Church does not occupy middle ground, and does not avoid extremes through compromises, or as an easy policy. On the contrary, she holds the middle ground because it is right, and she has come to it through her close discrimination between truth and error, and she holds it by greater positive effort and at greater cost than any other position possible could require. Every wind that

blows strikes her. Every changing tide sweeps over her. Every swing of the pendulum seeks to dislodge her. She has been most thoroughly misunderstood, and most unjustly misrepresented because of her determination to "hold fast." Luther spoke for the whole Church and for all time when he said, "Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise."

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CONFESSING CHURCH.

There has been no narrowness or selfishness, or arbitrary exclusiveness or bigotry in the Lutheran Church as a Church. There have been some Lutherans, alas! who have brought shame upon the name in these respects, but the Lutheran Church, as a Church, is truly catholic, that is, it is as broad in spirit as the Gospel itself. The deeper meaning of Luther's word to Zwingli was in its appeal to him to unite in the true faith, rather than in its refusal to fellowship with him externally by a compromise between truth and error. The Lutheran Church excludes none except those who exclude themselves by rejection of God's Word. The evidence of all this is found in the fact that the Lutheran Church is so remarkably characterized as a confessing Church. Her several distinct confessions, more numerous by far than those of any other body of Christians, are not so many efforts to state her faith for the sake of self-satisfaction through theological definition, but they mark her supreme desire to witness to the truth. She has always been just as eager to proclaim the truth as she has been to find it. She has found her great mission in preaching and teaching. She has "proved all things," and has "held fast to that which was good," that "the things which she heard

among many witnesses, she might commit to faithful men who should be able to teach others also." She has cared for the true "apostolic succession," succession in the possession and proclamation of pure truth. With her whole heart the Lutheran Church has witnessed (not all nominal Lutherans). She has witnessed with wonderful consistency. Not one of her confessions has been made to correct an error in another. Each new one has been but a supplement, an elaboration of preceding ones. There have been no revisions of creeds in the Lutheran Church. There has been no discarding of creeds. Not one has become a dead letter. She has witnessed with wonderful persistency. She has been attacked from every side. She has met the Chief Priest, and the mob, and Judas, and Peter, and Pilate. If the world, and the flesh, and the devil could have silenced the true Church of Christ, she would have been silenced long ago. But she has witnessed consistently and persistently for nearly four hundred years, and today she is in Jerusalem, and in Judea, and in Samaria, and in the uttermost ends of the earth bearing witness.

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH HAS ALWAYS BEEN A CONSTRUCTIVE CHURCH.

It is the truth. The Lutheran Church has been a constructive Church. What if her work has been retarded by unfaithful, unworthy, nominal adherents! What if she has made no great display! What if she has despised the blowing of horns, and the dazzle of the purely spectacular! She has been at work. She has been sinking deep the great foundation for the glorious superstructure that shall rise. What are four hundred years in a work so tremendous as

hers? Wrought not the Lord ten times four hundred years before the "fullness of time" came, and five times four hundred years through His chosen people e'er the consummation of their special mission appeared? But the Lord has done more than lay anew the great foundation work through the Lutheran Church in these last four hundred years. The Lutheran Church, under God, has builded mightily. She has wrought much in that spiritual temple invisible to mortal eyes. Millions of precious stones, saved souls, have been fitted by her into their eternal positions of glory. But she has done much also which may be seen and handled. We can no more than point to some of these great works. The Lutheran Church has built up a body of Christian literature during these four centuries, compared with which that which preceded seems incredibly small, and without which the Christian world would seem today to be impoverished. The Lutheran Church has reconstructed whole nations. What would Germany and Scandinavia be had the Lutheran Church never existed? More still, the Lutheran Church, under God, has constructed the whole Christian civilization of modern times. That other mighty forces have wrought in this great work we do not deny, but the directing, determining influence has come from the Lutheran Church. Her whole influence is positive in its character. She builds up the individual in the true faith, and she builds up the Church, the congregation of the saints, and she builds up all society by the power of divine truth. Who is this carping critic that seeks to belittle the work of the true Church of Christ? Where has he been all of his days, and what has he done? Is his name Tobiah? He may scoff, but Nehemiah will build the walls and will close up the breaches. Is this

critic faint-hearted and pessimistic? As an inspiration we say to him, "Walk about Zion, and go round about her: 'I the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generations following." Under the blessing of God she has builded towers, and bulwarks, and palaces. And under Him she shall continue to build, for He has said: "I will build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."